

IDENTIFYING INTEGRATION BARRIERS FOR REPATRIATED YOUNG PEOPLE IN ARMENIA*

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Abstract. The problem of repatriation is not new in the Armenian reality. Repatriation, as a process coordinated by the state (through official policy), with its periodicity and massiveness, draws special attention especially in the Soviet period of the Armenian history (in particular, in the case of the wave named "Great Repatriation" in 1946-1948 (Stepanyan, 2020)). Later, in the post-Soviet realities, although repatriation processes continue, they differ from previously organized manifestations, which creates the need for new studies reinterpreting the phenomenon. Along with the historical observations which provide important analytical perspectives, it is important to consider the conceptual foundations of the phenomenon of repatriation from a methodological point of view. In particular, according to distinct dictionary definitions of repatriation, it is the return from exile to the homeland, the return of prisoners of war and civilian population who are outside the borders of their homeland to their homeland as a result of military operations (Aghayan, 1976). Nevertheless, refraining from private definitions of the phenomenon, we will rely on the most general modern interpretations of repatriation, according to which repatriation is the process of returning to the country of departure or the ethnic homeland (regardless of the fact that sometimes the country of departure is not considered a homeland after generations (Barseghyan, 2019)). Moreover, it is important to study repatriation not only from the point of view of opportunities, but also from the point of view of the complex problems of the integration nature following the process.

Turning to integration as a social phenomenon, we have used the approaches of Bosswick and Heckmann, according to which social integration is the inclusion of the immigrant in the context of the institutional relations of the host country, as well as in the context of social roles and statuses. The authors consider social integration at four interrelated levels: structural, cultural, interactive, and self-identification. In particular, at the structural level, the necessary rights and opportunities provided for immigrants to participate in the host country's social statuses and basic institutions (such as the economy and labor market, the education system, civic participatory processes, housing services) are considered.

At the cultural level, the authors emphasize the inclusion of the immigrant in the cultural experiences of the host country, in which the acquisition of communication skills (i.e. language skills) about the host country's culture is of special importance. The interactive aspect of integration, in turn, implies the incorporation of the immigrant into the area of

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social networks and relationships of the host society. At the level of self-identification, Bosswick and Heckmann consider the immigrant's perceptions of self-identification and belonging to social groups in the host country (Bosswick, Heckmann, 2006).

Together with all of this, in the context of the integration issue, we have highlighted the experience of young repatriates, in which risks of integrative nature, with their possible negative impact, can lead to irreversible consequences. Thus, from the point of view of the socialization process, young people are seen as a key stage of human development, during which a person transitions from childhood to adulthood, or, in other words, from a state of dependence to a state of independence or interdependence. It is during youth that the individual creates foundations for the roles of maturity with their decisions (moral, social, economic, cultural, civil) (UNICEF, 2011). Moreover, the problems characteristic of this stage are even more pronounced in the conditions of the migration experience of young people, which is accompanied by unique risk factors. Their short-term and long-term negative manifestations can have irreversible harmful consequences in an individual's life. In particular, at the personal level, these problems can be expressed by the loss of the possibility of full human development, and at the societal level, they can be seen by the waste of the social, economic and cultural development potential of both sending and host countries (IOM Glossary on Migration, 2019).

Thus, within the framework of this article, the results of the analysis of the research data are presented, based on which the main features of the factors that serve as obstacles in the integration processes of the repatriated young people are identified. The article presents the heterogeneity of the mentioned factors (structural-institutional, social, cultural, identity), providing a multifaceted view of the current manifestations of repatriation.

Keywords: *repatriation, migration, forced migration, repatriated young people, integration*

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Համառոտագիր: Հայկական իրականությունում հայրենադարձության խնդիրը նոր չէ: Այն՝ որպես պետության կողմից համակարգվող (իշխանական քաղաքականության միջոցով) գործընթաց, իր պարբերականությամբ և զանգվածայնությամբ առանձնահատուկ ուշադրություն է գրավում հատկապես Հայաստանի պատմության խորհրդային շրջանում (մասնավորաբար, 1946-1948 թթ. «Մեծ հայրենադարձություն» անվանված ալիքի դեպքում (Stephanyan, 2020)): Հետագայում՝ հետխորհրդային իրողություններում թեև հայրենադարձության գործընթացները շարունակվում են, դրանք տարբերվում են նախկին կազմակերպված դրսևորումներից, ինչը երևույթը վերաիմաստավորող նոր հետազոտությունների անհրաժեշտություն է ստեղծում: Պատմական դիտարկումների և գուգա-հեռ՝ մեթոդաբանական տեսակետից կարևոր է դիտարկել նաև հայրենադարձության երևույթի հայեցակարգային հիմքերը: Ընդ որում, հայրենադարձությունը

կարևոր է ուսումնասիրել ոչ միայն հնարավորությունների, այլ նաև գործընթացին հետևող ինտեգրացիոն բնույթի բարդ խնդիրների տեսանկյունից:

Անդադառնալով ինտեգրացիային որպես սոցիալական երևույթի՝ օգտվել ենք Բոսվիքի և Հեքմանի մոտեցումներից, որոնց համաձայն՝ սոցիալական ինտեգրացիան իմիգրանտի ներառումն է ընդունող երկրի ինստիտուցիոնալ հարաբերությունների, ինչպես նաև սոցիալական դերերի և կարգավիճակների համատեքստում: Հեղինակները սոցիալական ինտեգրացիան դիտարկում են փոխկապակցված չորս՝ կառուցվածքային, մշակութային, ինտերակտիվ, ինքնանույնականացման մակարդակներում: Մասնավորապես, կառուցվածքային մակարդակում դիտարկվում են ընդունող երկրի սոցիալական կարգավիճակներում և հիմնական ինստիտուտներում (ինչպիսին են՝ տնտեսությունն ու աշխատաշուկան, կրթական համակարգը, քաղաքացիական մասնակցային գործընթացները, բնակարանային ծառայությունները) ներգրավվելու գործում իմիգրանտների համար ապահովված անհրաժեշտ իրավունքներն ու հնարավորությունները: Մշակութային մակարդակում հեղինակները կարևորում են իմիգրանտի ներառումը ընդունող երկրի մշակութային փորձառություններում, որում հատկապես կարևորվում է ընդունող երկրի մշակույթի վերաբերյալ հաղորդակցային հմտությունների (դիցուք՝ լեզվի իմացությունը) յուրացումը: Ինտեգրացիայի ինտերակտիվ ասպեկտն իր հերթին ենթադրում է իմիգրանտի ներառում ընդունող հասարակության սոցիալական ցանցերի և հարաբերությունների ոլորտ: Ինքնանույնականացման մակարդակում Բոսվիքը և Հեքմանը դիտարկում են ընդունող երկրի սոցիալական խմբերին ուղղված իմիգրանտի ինքնանույնականացման և պատկանելության ընկալումները (Bosswick, Heckmann, 2006):

Այս ամենին զուգահեռ՝ ինտեգրման հիմնախնդրի համատեքստում կարևորել ենք հատկապես երիտասարդ հայրենադարձների փորձը, որում ինտեգրացիոն բնույթի ռիսկերն իրենց հնարավոր բացասական ազդեցությամբ կարող են անդառնալի հետևանքների հանգեցնել: Մասնավորապես, սոցիալականացման գործընթացի տեսանկյունից երիտասարդությունը դիտվում է որպես մարդու զարգացման առանցքային փուլ, որի ընթացքում անձը անցում է կատարում մանկության փուլից դեպի հասունություն կամ, այլ կերպ ասած, կախյալության վիճակից դեպի անկախ կամ փոխկապվածության վիճակ: Հենց երիտասարդության շրջանում է անհատն իր որոշումներով (բարոյական, սոցիալական, տնտեսական, մշակութային, քաղաքացիական) հիմքեր ստեղծում հասունության շրջանի դերերի համար (UNICEF, 2011): Ընդ որում, այս փուլին բնորոշ խնդիրները էլ ավելի են ընդգծվում երիտասարդների միգրացիոն փորձի պայմաններում, որն ուղեկցվում է յուրօրինակ ռիսկի գործոններով: Դրանց կարճաժամկետ և երկարաժամկետ բացասական դրսևորումները կարող են անջրջելի վնասակար հետևանքներ ունենալ անհատի կյանքում: Մասնավորապես, անձնային մակարդակում հիշյալ խնդիրները կարող են արտահայտվել մարդկային լիարժեք զարգացման հնարավորության կորուստով, իսկ հասարակական մակարդակում՝ թե՛ ուղարկող, թե՛ ընդունող երկրների սոցիալական, տնտեսական և մշակութային զարգացման ներուժի փոշիացմամբ (IOM Glossary on Migration, 2019):

Այսպիսով, սույն հոդվածի շրջանակներում ներկայացվում են հետազո-

տության տվյալների վերլուծության արդյունքները, որոնց հիման վրա բացահայտվում են հայրենադարձ երիտասարդների ինտեգրման գործընթացները խոչընդոտող գործոնների հիմնական հատկանիշները: Հոդվածում ներկայացվում է նշված գործոնների տարասեռությունը (կառուցվածքային-ինստիտուցիոնալ, սոցիալական, մշակութային, ինքնութենական) բազմակողմանի պատկերացում տալով հայրենադարձության ներկա դրսևորումների վերաբերյալ:

Բանալի բառեր: *հայրենադարձություն, միգրացիա, հարկադիր միգրացիա, հայրենադարձ երիտասարդ, ինտեգրում*

ИНТЕГРАЦИОННЫЕ БАРЬЕРЫ МОЛОДЫХ РЕПАТРИАНТОВ В АРМЕНИИ

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Аннотация. В армянской действительности проблема репатриации не нова. Репатриация, как организованный процесс, со своей периодичностью и массивностью вызывала особое внимание, в частности, в советский период истории Армении. В постсоветских реалиях несмотря на то, что репатриационные процессы продолжают иметь место, они далеко не проявляются в таком организованном виде, как во время советского строя, тем самым подчеркивая необходимость новых, более актуальных исследований. Параллельно историческим наблюдениям, которые обеспечивают важную аналитическую перспективу, подчеркивая глубину и актуальность проблемы, с методологической точки зрения важно еще рассматривать концептуальную рамку того же явления. В этом плане, несмотря на разные аспекты толкования, репатриация в широком контексте определяется как акт возвращения субъекта в страну своего происхождения. Следовательно, лицо, вовлеченное в процесс, после возвращения, очутившись в новых социальных условиях сталкивается с комплексными проблемами интеграционного характера. Процесс интеграции или реинтеграции охватывает ряд социальных, культурных и гражданских проблем. В рамках данной статьи представлен результат анализа данных исследования (проведённый в период с января по апрель 2023 г.), на основе которого выявлены ключевые особенности типичных факторов, которые препятствуют интеграционным процессам репатриированной молодежи. В статье показана разнородность упомянутых факторов, которые варьируются от морально-психологических, культурно-символических до прагматически обоснованных интерпретаций, обеспечивая разностороннее осмысление текущих репатриационных проявлений.

Ключевые слова: *репатриация, миграция, вынужденная миграция, репатриированная молодежь, интеграция*

RESEARCH PROBLEM

In the studies of local experience regarding repatriation, special attention is paid to the Soviet period of Armenian history where the phenomenon stood out with its organized, phased nature. In this framework, the targeted policy by the USSR government, stemming from certain geopolitical motives, was aimed at organizing

the return of Armenians scattered all across the globe as a result of the Genocide to their country of departure or the parts of the homeland which were saved in order to contribute to the development of the latter (Laycock, 2012).

On the other hand, certain repatriation processes can be singled out also in the post-independence years, starting with the late 1990s. Nonetheless, given that the mentioned processes are conditioned by the crisis situations of the country of exit (e.g., Iraqi and Syrian wars), it is difficult to consider them as examples of repatriation organized by the initiative of the state authorities. Furthermore, each of the migration dimensions of return in the post-independence era are even worth discussing from the point of view of whether these experiences can be considered as repatriation examples in the classical sense.

Regardless of how unique the phenomenon of repatriation is, in terms of a migration process (mainly because a person returns to their country of departure), it is still considered that the person involved in the process often faces integration problems after the return which any other person involved in the migration process would face. Even if, from the point of view of intensity, these problems may have different manifestations, in any case, the process of integration or reintegration remains the same and includes the same areas of life: social, cultural, civil, among others (Oladele, 2002).

Within the scope of this study, which was carried out in the period of January-April 2023, an attempt was made to study the experience of repatriated young people in recent years (mainly in the period following 2018) related to the opportunities and obstacles of moving to the Republic of Armenia and integrating there. In this sense, an attempt was made to observe the security problems in the country, as well as economic, sociocultural (with their historical, symbolic aspects), moral and psychological factors and their impact on the integration process of repatriated young people.

RESEARCH DESCRIPTION

The research tried to address the following questions:

- To identify the structural-institutional aspects of integration obstacles of repatriated young people (including issues of civil status, economic, educational, housing, healthcare integration);
- To identify the cultural aspects of the integration issue of repatriated young people (including language communication, cultural experience);
- To identify the social aspects of the integration issue of repatriated young people (including engagement in local social networks, formation of new social ties);
- To clarify the peculiarities of the integration process of repatriated young people in the context of the problem of self-identification (including social-

psychological aspects of integration, perceptions of self-belonging, assimilation of self-identification features).

- Thus, based on the importance of the analysis of subjective perceptions and local realities around the diversity of factors manifested in the context of the integration problem of repatriated young people and their influence, various methods of qualitative research were used to collect data within the framework of the study, including the following:
 - expert surveys with integration policy makers and field researchers to form an expert assessment of the current situation in the field;
 - biographical surveys with young repatriates aged 18-35 in order to explore their personal experiences of repatriation. The relocation experience of repatriated young people represents a unique biographical turn, symbolizing a new phase of life, accompanied by manifestations of changes in external conditions and personal perceptions. In this context, in formulating their repatriation experience as a specific event, young people interpret and recreate this part of their life in the form of an original narrative consisting of connected plot stages. At the same time, based on the phenomenological and interaction approaches underlying the biographical method, the story of the life of young people characterized by the experience of repatriation is considered as a socially conditioned construct (Berger, Luckmann, 1966), which allows the process of repatriation to be understood in the broad context of social factors.

In parallel, legal acts regulating the process of integration of repatriates and conceptual documents referring to the phenomenon were also studied, which allowed to identify the institutional possibilities of integration of repatriates and limitations at the local level (in particular, at the level of normative legal regulations).

Based on the information obtained through the selected methods, the paper summarizes the results of 30 autobiographical surveys and 8 expert surveys (see Table 1), which were combined with the results of the study of documents regulating the field.

Table 1. Criteria for selection of experts

Work experience **At least 5 years**
(3 experts - 12 years; 5 experts - 8 years)

Profession	3 - Sociologist
	2 - Lawyer
	1 - Historian
	1 - Political scientist
	1 - Psychologist

Area of specialization	3 - Diaspora studies (including repatriation, migration) 3 - Migration 1 - Political studies 1 - Repatriation
Workplace	NAS Institute of Archeology and Ethnography YSU Chair of Diaspora Studies Russian-Armenian University, Department of Political Science Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs Migration Service University of Michigan

RESEARCH RESULTS

Thus, in the context of the integration process, according to the theoretical provisions that serve as the basis for the research, an important place is allocated to the structural aspects of the problem. Moreover, in discussing **the structural-institutional aspects** of the factors hindering the integration of repatriated young people into the Armenian society, one should consider at least the groups of factors that refer to the civil status of a person, inclusion in the economy, including the labor market, housing security, access to educational and health care facilities services (considering the latter as elements of instrumental significance in the integration process). As one of the experts involved in the study highlighted,

“... the issue of repatriates should be considered more “through the pragmatic lens”. This means that when talking about making the decision to move to Armenia, we should understand what the state offers to the repatriates and to what degree these offers can be helpful and encouraging for a repatriate from the point of view of integration into the Armenian society.” (expert - specialist on Diaspora studies, sociologist).

Among the institutional aspects of integration, the question of what kind of **civil status** the host country grants the migrant entering the country (in this case, repatriate) is of pivotal importance, given that the question of status further determines the range of social guarantees given to this person by the state.

As the results of the study show, in terms of actual civil statuses, repatriates in RA are quite a diverse group. Their bigger part are RA citizens or dual citizens, and a much smaller part are those who have a refugee or asylum seeker status. At the same time, the status of "a repatriate" as such does not exist in RA, therefore there is no procedure for the recognition of the status and no legal regulations arising from it, which, given the specificity of their situation, will make certain programs or services available to persons in this group.

Nonetheless, certain provisions of the Government’s program address the

importance of repatriation and include it among the state priorities; in parallel, the Office of the High Commissioner of Diaspora Affairs implements many programs (both continuous-regular, and one-time); however, in terms of practical steps, the universal political approach is still unclear.

Regardless of repatriates, as ethnic Armenians, granted the opportunity to obtain RA citizenship in a simplified manner, which, in essence, is the highest status of a person in the state, these persons are actually deprived of the opportunity to use services and programs aimed at responding to their special needs arising in the integration context, because the institutional sides of integration, including employment, housing, health, education, among others, are in fact solved within the framework of regulations that apply to RA citizens.

“In any case, we see that the issue of repatriation is considered within the general migration problem. Special events take place only on a situational, case-by-case basis, as was in the case of the immigration of Syrian-Armenians. It is only such major events during which certain groups are activated as well as working groups are formed. Yet these are only there to solve local problems.” (expert - specialist on Diaspora studies, sociologist).

“... You can stay in Armenia with an Armenian passport for as long as you wish. It's your country, your homeland.” (respondent age - 33, sex - male, country of departure - Syria).

We consider the question of participation in economic life in the context of **economic security**, which mainly refers to the organization of employment, considering both the opportunities for the free labor market and for self-employment.

“... If the young repatriate knows that he or she can earn money and have an independent life in Armenia, I believe this is how we can best contribute to making such a decision” (expert - lawyer, policy-maker in migration).

The results of autobiographical surveys show that one of the most difficult problems for all groups is integration in economic life and the labor market.

“Neither my husband nor I are 20-year-old youngsters who could go to another country and start a new life. We thought that we would be more useful in our homeland. Now we are here, and of course I can't work right now as my child is yet too young, but my husband is trying to venture something. It's just that it's too hard.” (respondent age - 35, sex - female, country of departure - Kherson, Ukraine).

“My husband works and I don't. It's not easy. We've had quite a lot of trouble. I want to tell you that before we managed to settle and organize things, we had quite a lot of trouble.” (respondent age - 30, sex - female, country of departure - Syria).

“The problems were mostly related to work, as wherever I knocked on the door to get in, if they heard that I had just come to Armenia, they would tell me - oh no,

if you come work here, we will not pay you for 4-5 weeks, it will be like this, it will be like that. They were, how to put it, a bit scared. I am serious. Everyone was saying it.” (respondent age - 26, sex - female, country of departure - Iran).

The most common problems are related to the knowledge of Armenian (especially written), low salaries, long working hours, lack of knowledge of laws, and limited jobs. Moreover, within the context of integration in the labor market, those who came to Armenia through a staged relocation have been more successful. That is, a person has prepared to move to Armenia, in the meantime forming minimum prerequisites for relocation at least in terms of residence and work.

“Yes, I’ve been here many times. Economically, it’s better here now. As I’ve visited Armenia a lot, I’ve been in constant contact, and of course economically speaking it’s much better now than years ago. Yes, I’ve visited it, but I could say that Armenia is more focused on Armenia.” (respondent age - 33, sex - male, country of departure - Syria).

“Here the work-related problems are low pay, long working hours and workload. If you want to find a normal job, you need to start your own business. But if you start your own business, the market is small, and you need to do something else to move forward.” (respondent age - 36, sex - male, country of departure - Russia).

“But if we take the material, financial aspect, then you need to have a clear plan, project in advance, like me, what you will do if you come.” (respondent age - 34, sex - male, country of departure - Russia).

“Before we came, there were rumors that they would not let us work, but there is no such thing. It’s the complete opposite, we are completely free. If you do everything legally, work legally, you will not face any problems.” (respondent age - 33, gender - male, country of departure - Syria)

Access to educational services includes both the provision of access to higher education and the possibility of placement in kindergarten and school for children of young families, providing accompanying services during this period, at least in terms of learning the language.

In fact, the regulations here work in conjunction with the compulsory public education system, which implies the organization of school-age children's education in public schools, which in turn can be accompanied by additional support services, if the child is recognized as needing special educational conditions. Otherwise, no additional support services will be available. In this sense, issues related to ensuring access to information for parents regarding the procedures for including the child in the general education system are also of importance.

As for vocational education, as such it is not connected in any way to the issues of integration in the labor market. Accordingly, in this sense, the question remains in the field of personal decision.

"It is true that I have received higher education, and my husband does not. That's why it's very difficult for him; besides, there's the language problem, we don't know how to read and write Armenian. Look, I speak better than my husband. But for example, I am an accountant by profession, and if I don't know how to read and write when dealing with documents, how can I work?" (respondent age - 35, gender - female, country of departure - Ukraine)

"I will definitely take accounting courses, because whatever I studied in Iran is actually not the same. Even though I have a problem with money now, if I advance a bit, I will definitely participate in those courses. I want to study both SMM and accounting. I know what I need to do to learn these from scratch." (respondent age - 26, gender - female, country of departure - Iran)

"We studied well at school, but both my brother and I know how to read, write and speak Armenian well thanks to my mother. When we came to Armenia, I studied cooking at school. I worked in different kitchens during my studies. I am currently working in a Syrian kitchen. There is no difference for me, the important thing is to work." (respondent age - 26, gender - female, country of departure - Syria)

In the context of integration, two main components of issues arising in relation to **access to health services** can be distinguished. The first component refers to providing access to information about the system and procedures in general. This includes awareness in at least the following areas: the way the health system works, the procedures in place for contacting a doctor, and the services provided on a paid and free basis. The second group of components is related to the statuses that the repatriates have, for example, whether they are an RA citizen or a refugee. Here we also face the problem of so-called "hidden repatriates" who are able to live and work in RA with the status of residence, but are deprived of access to public services, including some services on a free basis.

"The situation is the same everywhere. My child was sick, and when we took him to the doctor, they told us that you are not a citizen of the Republic of Armenia, you have to pay. No one cares whether you have money or not, you have to pay." (respondent age - 35, gender - female, country of departure - Ukraine)

The issue of **housing and sustainable housing** continues to be a considerable factor among the significant barriers to integration. As most of the experts have pointed out, the situation calls for concrete solutions, and it is not about ownership, but about the availability of safe and stable housing for the longest possible period, including on a rental basis.

"First of all, the work should be good. You know, it's difficult to live here, it's not easy, we live on rent. Let me tell you, we are happy, but we are not calm in our mind, we are always thinking about how we will pay the rent, how we will live. Livelihood is very poor here. Those monthly payments are gone, that business is gone. Let's hope it will all be good." (respondent age - 30, gender - female, country

of departure - Syria)

"Before coming to Armenia, I had already rented the house and I was very satisfied with the neighborhoods. But when the Russian-Ukrainian problems started and that infiltration happened, the prices increased, it was already very bad for me. I changed my house, and I came to a building with no water, no gas boiler. We heat the house with electricity. And that infiltration of the Russians has affected me very badly." (respondent age - 26, gender - female, country of departure - Iran)

"No, we don't even have a house here, we stay at friends' houses, we have to do everything from scratch. But here it is easy in that at least we have relatives, and our relatives are by our side." (respondent age - 35, gender - female, country of departure - Ukraine)

In this case, those people who have the status of asylum seeker or refugee at least have the possibility to benefit from the guarantee of temporary accommodation on a free basis, in contrast to repatriates with the status of citizens.

"Yes, they helped us with accommodation, frankly speaking. When my mother and I came, we applied as refugees, they gave us a room in the dormitory for free, so that we could stay as long as we need, until we could rent a house or, God willing, buy a house here." (respondent age - 26, gender - female, country of departure - Syria)

The other group, which is able to solve housing-related issues mainly consists of people who have either planned their move to RA in advance and, accordingly, have taken steps towards acquiring housing, or are in the self-employment sector.

"We live in a rented apartment now. But I have bought a house with a mortgage, it will be ready in 5 months and we will move to our house." (respondent age - 26, gender - male, country of departure - Syria)

"Yes, my house will be ready in August. This year I already got married, and we are planning to live as a family in our new house. I opened two branches of the hair salon here to be able to see to all the needs of my parents and my new family. I took out a mortgage for 10 years so that after 10 years I could take another place, so that my brothers and I could work in the same area and see the good in everything. If you see good, everything is good, if you see difficulties, it automatically becomes difficult. You should always be optimistic." (respondent age - 26, gender - male, country of departure - Aleppo, Syria)

Among the aspects of **social integration** of the repatriated young people, we observe a trend when the presence of relatives, friends or acquaintances in Armenia, as well as the presence of a precedent among acquaintances, has played a significant role as an influential factor in making decisions about moving to Armenia. Hence, a person mostly moves to an environment where there have already been formed certain connections and experience with Armenia and Armenian residents.

"When we left Syria, our Syrian-Armenian acquaintances mostly came to

Armenia, which is why and following their advice, we came to Armenia.” (respondent age - 24, sex - female, country of departure - Syria).

“I was aware of Armenia before coming back here, I was in constant contact and often visited Armenia, so it’s not like I had to learn anything new about Armenia.” (respondent age - 30, sex - male, country of departure - Ukraine).

Moreover, the situation related to the formation of new social relations or inclusion in new networks can be quite different based on the experience that each repatriate has had as a result of communication with the local population. What is also significant here is how wide the circle of acquaintances is. On the other hand, the number and density of other persons who have moved from the country of departure to Armenia are also important and what mutual relations they have. In other words, if the person has moved with their supportive social network, there is less probability that they will seek new connections.

“I really liked human communication. For instance, I am very close to my neighbors. It makes me calm. Everyone respects me.” (respondent age - 30, sex - female, country of departure - Syria).

“... had I wanted, I could have found a native Armenian friend. But now I mostly communicate with my Iranian-Armenian repatriated friends. And because today there are many Iranian-Armenians as well as Iranians in Armenia, they also find us and become friends with us.” (respondent age - 18, sex - male, country of departure - Iran).

In particular, among repatriates who have moved from the Middle East and Iran, it is visible that there are certain reservations related to the integration in social life which occur within the constant comparison of lifestyles of Armenians of the departure and host countries. These differences often hinder the establishment of new ties with the locals and make the repatriates form groups and associations based on the belonging to the country of departure. As noted by one of the respondents,

“I was part of the cultural life there. In Tehran I was a scout for 7 years, and here I’m not. Probably the cultural life in Tehran was better in that there were fewer Armenians there and everyone was interconnected. For example, a small thing I’ve observed is that here the holidays are not celebrated, be it Easter or any other holiday. I am so surprised. No one gathers everyone together to celebrate, to have a holiday, nothing of the kind, and in Tehran all holidays are widely celebrated by everyone aged 0 to 100.” (respondent age - 26, sex - female, country of departure - Iran).

Addressing the **cultural** aspects of integration of repatriated young people, we would like to note that they have been observed in the context of cognitive, behavioral and attitudinal factors of the person which has allowed us to identify the integration peculiarities manifested within the mentioned aspects. In particular, the level of awareness of the repatriated young people about the local culture, the

correspondence between their main behaviors and the dominant cultural norms, as well as the determining role of the local culture in the formation of a person's attitude towards the environment, have been taken into account.

Accordingly, the cultural integration of repatriated young people has been primarily studied in the context of cognitive models. In particular, the study we have conducted has shown that in this case, certain gaps have been noticed between the initial expectations about the local culture and impressions formed in Armenia, which leads to dual perceptions within the framework of acquiring the new culture. In this case, there is a question between the globalized Armenian culture spread in the Diaspora and the Armenian local types of culture, which are often not identified. As experts note,

“They are our compatriots. Yet we also need to bear in mind that they are carriers of a different culture, one different from that of Armenia; they also carry the Armenian culture, global Armenia culture, but again it’s not identical to the Armenian reality of Armenia. We bear the influence of completely different cultural flows than them. This is the main difference between us and them.” (Sociologist, RA).

Still, regardless of the mentioned contradictions, in the case of many repatriated young people, the role of the positive impact of cognitive experience on cultural integration is highlighted. In this respect, such answers of the respondents are interesting to observe:

“When it comes to living here, we tell them from the beginning to think carefully because everything is expensive. But in fact, our monasteries, air and history are worth everything. Some time ago, a Ukrainian moved to Armenia following our advice and he was very satisfied. We showed him around our lovely Armenia, our monasteries. And he liked our culture very much. In Ukraine, the culture is a bit different. For them, the monasteries, too, are perceived differently.” (respondent age - 35, sex - female, country of departure - Kherson, Ukraine).

On the other hand, the decisive factor in the cultural integration of repatriated young people is not only the cognitive experience of the latter, but also the tendencies to expand the cognitive circles of local Armenians, which is characterized by tolerance and inclusiveness towards globalized cultural types.

“We have become more tolerant. It is definitely also due to the technological opportunities because we are directly, second-hand, third-hand, still better acquainted with other cultures; we are more open to other cultures than before. In the past, someone speaking Western Armenian was very different. The gap between the locals and them was very big; it was seen as a big difference, and it was mechanically rejected. Now we are more open not only to Western Armenian, but also to other languages.” (Sociologist, RA).

Along with this, the cultural aspects of integration imply the learning of

communication skills of the culture of the host country (in this case, language proficiency). In this regard, the absence of language barriers becomes a stimulating factor in the process of cultural integration. It is no coincidence that the respondents perceive linguistic and cultural factors more as opportunities rather than problems (the commonalities are more highlighted). As mentioned by one of the respondents,

“The first reason was that it would be more affordable to come to Armenia, and the second reason was my language. The third reason is that I love this country. I believe that every Armenian dreams of coming to Armenia. Since a young age, we have dreamed of coming to Armenia. But we couldn’t come, because we had work there, we were always busy with our work, just like the locals here have to work every day.” (respondent age - 33, sex - male, country of departure - Aleppo, Syria).

At the **identity** level of integration, integration is expressed mainly by a sense of belonging (to the territory, nationality, this or that ethnic group), following the processes of recognition and acceptance manifested in the process of cultural integration. Studies of the identity issue show that in the XXI century the temporal aspects of identity are of interest. In this context, besides the retrospective and actual dimensions of identity, the prospective, future-oriented dimension of the identity also comes forwards.

In particular, prospective identity is regarded by researchers as a set of certain characteristics of a person’s self-identification aimed at the future (Белинская, 2003). From this angle, it is interesting to observe that Armenia has been selected as a final destination for settlement by those repatriates in whose self-identity the retrospective aspect (identification with the historical past of the nation) is dominant.

Nevertheless, at the prospective level of identity, together with considerable uncertainty, there are also other views, according to which Armenia is not considered as a residence for the future, which speaks of a low level of sense of belonging. In this regards, such answers by the respondents can be of interest:

“To tell you the truth, I don’t see my future here. If I find a way, I’ll move to Europe so that I can make money more easily and live more easily.” (respondent age - 32, male - sex, country of departure - Syria).

“To be honest, my future plans are not so connected to Armenia. It is just that for our family the right thing is to live here now. We’ll live and see. We’ll see what life will show.” (respondent age - 18, sex - female, country of departure - Moscow, Russia)

In general, having analyzed the temporal dimensions of self-identification in the context of identity integration, we can observe a certain polarization of retrospective, actual and prospective identities among repatriates, which is an additional obstacle to the formation of sustainable models of belonging.

CONCLUSIONS

So, based on the analysis of the study data, we can single out the following conclusions:

- At present, the main problem of the RA policy on repatriation is the shortcomings observed in the target-coordinated approaches. In particular, regardless of the different programs that are implemented, in terms of active practical steps deriving from a unified concept, there are considerable shortcomings; as a rule, the implemented steps are not systemic.
- The experience of the repatriation of the post-independent era is based not so much on the actions organized by the state but rather on the voluntary-personal/family decisions caused by geopolitical crises. Moreover, in this case, the state appears in the role of “a passive responder”, often not managing these flows and being unable to maintain them in the homeland.
- There is a need to promote comprehensively balanced approaches to the understanding of the issue of repatriation in Armenia, in which not only the interests of the host country (in this case, Armenia) will be considered but also the disintegration risks of resources available in the traditional communities of the Diaspora and Armenian institutional structures in other countries.
- In terms of the integration of repatriated young people in the economic life and labor market, phased or gradual approaches to the relocation of the repatriates are seen as more effective. However, in this sector, such problems as insufficient level of language proficiency, low salaries, long working hours, lack of knowledge of laws and shortage of jobs are common.
- There is no comprehensive set of legal regulations aimed at activating the repatriation process, but in this respect certain legal regulations which have a stimulating effect can be observed (in particular, the simplified procedure of citizenship, regulations related to customs payments, the system of privileges in higher education).
- Within the framework of the issue of integration of repatriated young people, there occur issues of long-term accommodation which are mainly aggravated in the case of the transition from the temporary status of repatriation to the permanent status.
- Issues of access to educational services and health arising from the structural integration process of repatriated young people mostly occur in the range of repatriates’ status and following risks, as well as the limitations of awareness mechanisms about the provided services.
- In the social integration of repatriated young people, a decisive role is played by both the circumstance of having relatives, friends or acquaintances in Armenia, and the precedent among the acquaintances.

- In the cultural integration of repatriated young people, on the one hand, there is the favorable role of the language factor and, on the other hand, there is the hindering factor because of the existing contradictions between the formed expectations in the country of departure and the perceptions formed in Armenia.
- In the process of integration of repatriates in Armenia, the trends of tolerance and comfortable environment serve as the basis for cultural inclusion. At the same time, some stereotypical perceptions and misunderstandings (especially in the case of voluntary repatriates) regarding the motivations for repatriation are still observed among Armenian residents.
- There is the problem of the formation of stable models of awareness of sense of belonging conditioned by temporal factors (self-identification oriented to the past, present, future) in the identity integration process of repatriated young people.
- Encouraging repatriation is important to consider in the context of efforts aimed at reducing and mitigating emigration, which will allow to avoid such measures and interventions that may create a demand for social justice or an ambiance of intolerance in the society.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

Ethical Standards

The authors affirm this research did not involve human subjects.